DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 300 658 CE 051 362

TITLE	Employment in Perspective: Women in the Labor Force. Third Quarter 1988. Report 758.
INSTITUTION	Bureau of Labor Statistics (DOL), Washington, D.C.
PUB DATE	88
NOTE	4p.
PUB TYPE	Statistical Data (110)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Employed Women; *Employment Level; *Employment Patterns; Employment Practices; Employment Projections; Employment Statistics; Females; *Futures (of Society); *Older Adults; Sex Bias; Sex Discrimination; Trend Analysis; Wages
IDENTIFIERS	Current Population Survey

ABSTRACT

The female share of the older work force has nearly doubled since 1950. In 1987, the 6.2 million women aged 55 and over in the labor force constituted 4 of every 10 older workers. Because young women today have a stronger work attachment than did their mothers and grandmothers, the female share of the older work force is likely to continue to increase. The employment characteristics of older women today reflect not only age-related factors but also lifetime work patterns and attitudes unique to the group; i.e., women were not expected to work after marriage, whereas unmarried women usually worked. Over the past several decades, fundamental changes have occurred in women's work life patterns. Three decades ago, only about 3 in 10 young women worked, whereas today 7 in 10 women between the ages of 25 and 34 are in the labor force. Women reaching their fifties or sixties several decades from now will have much more work experience than the women born before them. However, these women, as their predecessors, are still concentrated in three occupational groups--sales, administrative support, and services--which usually pay low wages. Therefore, their retirement benefits, although better than those of older women of today, will still be lower than men's and will affect their work life in their older years. (Data were gathered from the Current Population Survey.) (KC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED300658

Employment in Perspective: Women in the Labor Force

Third Quarter 1988

U.S. Department of Labor
Bureau of Labor Statistics

Report 758

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

☑ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.

☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.

• Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

Employment of Older Women

The female share of the older work force has nearly doubled since 1950. In 1987, the 6.2 million women age 55 and over in the labor force constituted 4 of every 10 older workers. Because young women today have a stronger work attachment than did their mothers and grandmothers, the female share of the older work force is likely to continue to increase. Data in this report come from the Current Population Survey, and were discussed in some detail in a September 1988 *Monthly Labor Review* article.[1]

The employment characteristics of older women today reflect not only age-related factors but also lifetime work patterns and attitudes unique to this group. Many women currently in their fifties and sixties first reached working age in the 1940's or 1950's, when women were often neither expected nor encouraged to work and when employment opportunities for them were limited (especially prior to World War II). Marital status often determined worklife experiences; most married women remained out of the labor force, worked intermittently, or chose abbreviated work schedules. In contrast, unmarried women often worked full time for many years. Also, black women were much more likely to work than were white women. (See table A.)

Over the past several decades, fundamental changes have occurred in women's worklife patterns. Comparing the labor market experiences of women in their twenties and thirties today with those of older women when they were that age points out striking generational differences. Three decades ago, for example, only about 3 in 10 young women worked. In contrast, more than 7 in 10 women between the ages of 25 and 34 were in the labor force in 1987. Differences according to marital status have also changed dramatically; participation rates of young married and never-married women differed by more than 50 percentage points 30 years ago; today, that gap is only 13 percentage points.

Clearly, women reaching their fifties or sixties several decades from now will have had much more work experience than the women born before them. Other employment characteristics, however, may not change as much. In 1987, a majority of both older and younger women worked in three occupational groups—sales, administrative support, and services. These jobs often pay low wages. While young women have increased their representation in some nontraditional fields, such as law and medicine, most employment growth continues to be in traditionally female occupations.

Partly reflecting their occupational distribution, women of all ages earn substantially less than their male counterparts. For many reasons, the "earnings gap" is greatest for the oldest workers; women age 55 to 64 who worked full time and year round in 1987 earned only 56 percent as much as men the same age. Those age 25 to 34 who worked full schedules earned 73 percent as much as their male counterparts.

Some of the labor force experiences of older women in 1987 may not be repeated. When the young women of today reach their fifties and sixties, they will have had much more work experience than either their mothers or grandmothers, and their retirement decisions will be more similar to men's. However, women's occupational and earnings profiles, which have been changing only gradually, will continue to affect their work activity at age 55 and beyond.

[1] See Diane E. Herz, "Employment Characteristics of Older Women, 1987," pp. 3–9.

Table A. Labor force participation rates of women by selected ages and by race and marital status, 1957 and 1987[1]

(Percent in labor force)

Race and marital status	25 to 34 years		55 to 64 years		65 years and over	
	1957	1987	1957	1987	1957	1987
Total	35.6	72.4	34.5	42.7	10.5	7.4
White	33.5	72.5	33.7	42.4	10.3	7.2
Black[2]	50.5	73.5	44.3	44.4	13.3	8.6
Married, husband present	27.6	68.6	24.0	39.0	6.6	7.4
Single (never married)	84.4	81.8	69.2	53.4	23.7	10.9
Widowed, divorced, separated	63.9	76.3	49.6	49.8	11.2	8.2

[1] All figures are from the Current Population Survey. Participation rates for the total and by race are annual averages for 1957 and 1987. Rates for marital status groups are from the March 1958 and 1988 supplements to the CPS.

[2] 1957 figures are for the "black and other" population; 1987 figures are for blacks only.

CE 051362

Summary indicators on women in the labor force, by quarter, seasonaly adjusted, 1987 and 1988

(Numbers in thousands.)

Indicator	1987		1988		
	III	IV	I	II	III
Population and labor force					
Women, 16 years and over:					
Civilian noninstitutional population[1]	95,983	96,211	96,447	96,644	96,859
Civilian labor force	53,831	54,156	54,477	54,409	54,789
Civilian labor force participation rates					
Women, 16 years and over	56.1	56.3	56.5	56.3	56.6
16 to 19 years	53.6	53.8	53.6	53.0	54.4
20 years and over	56.3	56.5	56.7	56.6	56.7
20 to 24 years	73.0	72.6	73.6	72.5	72.6
25 to 54 years	72.1	72.2	72.3	72.4	72.8
55 years and over	22.0	22.3	22.3	22.1	22.1
White	55.8	55.9	56.2	56.2	56.4
Black	58.2	59.0	58.2	56.8	58.2
Employment status					
Women, 16 years and over:					
Employed	50,567	50,918	51,338	51,387	51,713
Unemployed	3,263	3,239	3,138	3,021	3,077
16 to 19 years:					
Employed	3,312	3,296	3,300	3,288	3,341
Unemployed	593	623	596	556	575
20 years and over:					
Employed	47,255	47,621	48,038	48,100	48,372
Unemployed	2,671	2,615	2,542	2,465	2,502
20 to 24 years:					
Employed	6,454	6,414	6,450	6,312	6,328
Unemployed	661	594	607	603	502
25 to 54 years:					
Employed	34,875	35,118	35,431	35,722	36,062
Unemployed	1,822	1,813	1,766	1,694	1,756
55 years and over:					
Employed	5,982	6,089	6,105	6,051	6,039
Unemployed	186	201	170	177	183
Unemployment rates					
Women, 16 years and over	6.1	6.0	5.8	5.6	5.6
16 to 19 years	15.2	15.9	15.3	14.5	14.7
20 years and over	5.3	5.2	5.0	4.9	4.9
20 to 24 years	9.3	8.5	8.6	8.7	8.2
25 to 54 years	5.0	4.9	4.7	4.5	4.6
55 years and over	3.0	3.2	2.7	2.8	2.9
White, 16 years and over	5.1	5.0	4.8	4.6	4.8
White, 16 to 19 years	13.1	13.1	12.9	12.4	12.5
Black, 16 years and over	12.7	12.6	12.4	12.2	11.4
Black, 16 to 19 years	30.0	34.8	34.8	32.8	32.2
Full-time workers					
Percent of employed women working full time	74.1	74.0	74.2	74.5	74.3
Percent of unemployed women looking for full-time work	73.8	73.3	73.8	73.3	73.4

See footnotes at end of table.

Summary indicators on women in the labor force, by quarter, seasonally adjusted, 1987 and 1988—Continued

(Numbers in thousands.)

Indicator	1987		1988		
	III	IV	I	II	III
Duration of unemployment [1]					
Average (mean) number of weeks unemployed women have been looking for work	11.0	11.8	12.0	11.1	10.5
Marital status					
Married women, husband present:					
Civilian noninstitutional population	52,547	52,584	52,644	52,680	52,976
Civilian labor force participation rate	56.0	56.0	56.7	56.7	56.5
Unemployment rate	4.2	4.2	4.1	3.8	4.0
Women who maintain families:					
Civilian noninstitutional population	10,808	10,847	10,915	10,714	10,814
Civilian labor force participation rate	62.0	62.7	61.5	61.4	62.6
Unemployment rate	9.1	8.6	8.2	8.2	8.0

[1] Not seasonally adjusted.

NOTE: Due to rounding and independent seasonal adjustment, some components may not add to totals.

Technical Note

Data in this table are from the Current Population Survey, a national sample survey of 55,800 households. The information obtained from this survey relates to the employment status of persons 16 years old and over in the civilian noninstitutional population. Seasonally adjusted data for the 5 most recent years are subject to revision at the end of each year, based on recomputation of the seasonal factors to reflect an additional year of experience. For a detailed explanation of the Current Population Survey, including sampling reliability and more complete definitions than those below, see *Employment and Earnings*, published monthly by the Bureau of Labor Statistics.

Brief definitions

The *civilian labor force* comprises all persons classified as employed or unemployed.

The *civilian employed* are all persons who during the survey week: (a) Did any work at all as paid civilians; (b) worked in their own business or profession or on their own farm; (c) worked 15 hours or more as unpaid workers in a family business; or (d) were temporarily absent from their jobs due to illness, vacation, bad weather, etc.

Unemployed persons are those who had no employment during the survey week, were available for work at that time, and made specific efforts to find employment sometime during the prior 4 weeks. Persons laid off from their former jobs and awaiting recall and those expecting to report to a job within 30 days need not be looking for work to be classified as unemployed.

Not in the civilian labor force are all persons not classified as employed or unemployed.

The *civilian labor force participation rate* is the civilian labor force as percent of the civilian noninstitutional population.

The *civilian workers unemployment rate* is the unemployed as a percent of the civilian labor force.

Full-time workers are those who usually work 35 hours or more per week. *Part-time workers* are those who usually work 1 to 34 hours per week.

For further information, contact Diane Herz, Division of Labor Force Statistics, Bureau of Labor Statistics, Washington, DC 20212. Phone: 202-523-1944.